

spring 2008

Livingwell

Highlands
Medical Center

**Fast, Convenient
Emergency Care**

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Sleep

Your Body Needs It

Highlands Sleep Disorders Center helped Jason Hass sleep better—here's how it can help you.

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Need a Physician? Call 218.3600.

Meet Dr. Amjad

MUHAMMAD AMJAD, MD, completed his pediatrics residency at the Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center in Bronx, New York.

Dr. Amjad has office hours Monday through Friday at both the Scottsboro Medical Clinic and Pisgah Medical Clinic. Appointments can be scheduled at the Pisgah office between 8:30 a.m. and noon and at the Scottsboro office from 1:30 to 5 p.m. Saturday appointments are available from 9 a.m. to noon at the Pisgah Medical Clinic office.

“Ensuring the children of the Jackson County community stay healthy is my top priority,” says Dr. Amjad. “I love caring for children, and I look forward to building a strong physician relationship with families here.”

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Amjad, call the Scottsboro office at 574.6157 or the Pisgah office at 451.1250.



Muhammad Amjad, MD, Pediatrician

Find the *Flower* and **WIN!**

LOOK FOR THE **hidden flower** in this issue of *Living Well* for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to a local restaurant.

E-mail information to info@highlandsmc.com, or send a postcard or note with your name, address and phone number, indicating the page number and location of the flower to:

Highlands Medical Center
Attn: Marketing and Business Development
P.O. Box 1050
Scottsboro, AL 35768

All entries are due by May 30. Must be 18 years or older to enter. Highlands Medical Center employees and their immediate families are not eligible for the drawing. Winner will be drawn at random.



Congratulations to last issue's winner: Glenda Higden of Higdon, AL.

Did you find the mittens? They were hidden on the girl's shirt on page 7.

On the cover: When Jason Hass, a Scottsboro High School teacher and football coach, was diagnosed with sleep apnea, Highlands Sleep Disorders Center helped him sleep better.



A Quicker ER at *Your Service*

You take a visit to the emergency department seriously. When you come to Highlands Medical Center's Emergency Department, our medical staff takes your care just as seriously – offering an efficient visit with high-quality care.



Robert Dawson, RN, assesses an Emergency Department patient.

THE AVERAGE VISIT to an emergency department (ED) in the United States lasts nearly 3.7 hours, but Highlands' ED team outperforms that average by 32 percent. The staff categorizes patients based on the severity of their need for medical attention, ensuring patients are seen as quickly as possible. Even those whose condition is considered less severe receive timely attention during the ED's peak hours, thanks to a fast-track area specially designed to meet their needs.

"We are a Joint Commission-approved facility, and our wait times are better than most anywhere," says John Hawes, RN, Chief Nursing Officer at Highlands. "As an emergency department, we are able to meet patient needs, no matter the condition."

The Fast Track to Health

The newer fast-track clinic has allowed the ED to spend more time on patients with severe or immediate needs.

"We have a nurse practitioner who staffs the fast-track area, which is open from 1 to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on the weekends," says Renee Guthrie, RN, Nurse Manager of the Highlands ED. "This is more convenient for less urgent needs."

The Sooner the Better

When the need is urgent, exemplary care is available.

"Our Highlands ED handles the majority of emergencies all the way through to the point of discharge or admission," says Guthrie. "In those few cases when we have to transfer a patient to another facility, the opportunity to first assess then stabilize their needs here can be lifesaving."

If you have a true emergency, any extra travel time is very dangerous. The sooner treatment begins, the more likely you will end up with a healthy outcome.

 For more information about Highlands' ED services, call 259.4444.



Renee Guthrie, RN, Nurse Manager of the Highlands Medical Center Emergency Department, works with staff to ensure patients are seen as quickly as possible.

Emergency Department Helpful Hints

Most likely, waiting in the emergency department (ED) isn't at the top of your favorite things to do. But here are steps you can take to make the process less tedious.

The most important thing, according to Renee Guthrie, RN, Nurse Manager of the Highlands Medical Center ED, is to remember that patients are seen in order of how severe their needs are.

"The emergency department doesn't function on a first-come, first-served basis," says Guthrie. "When you come, understand that you will be evaluated as quickly as possible."

Knowing your personal medical history and a description of your current symptoms will expedite the process.

"Bring a list of your medications with you, including all herbal supplements and over-the-counter medications," says Guthrie. "Be prepared to answer questions about your medical history. Giving prompt responses regarding your medication allergies and health history will help determine your needs and route you quickly to the appropriate area of the emergency department."



As Medical Director of Highlands Medical Center's Emergency Department, Chris Blevins, MD, is trained to diagnose and stabilize patients experiencing a variety of symptoms.

Want Better Days?

Get Better Nights

HIGHLANDS SLEEP DISORDERS CENTER *provides treatment to help you get the rest* YOUR BODY NEEDS.

IF YOU CONSTANTLY feel tired, fall asleep throughout the day, have difficulty concentrating or have trouble falling or staying asleep, you may be like 40 million other Americans who suffer from a sleep disorder. Fortunately, Highlands Medical Center can provide the treatment necessary to help you sleep through the night.

“The three most common disorders treated are insomnia, shift-work syndrome and sleep apnea,” says Charlie Vaughn, Technical Director of Highlands Sleep Disorders Center. “Specialists work with patients to determine the causes of their disorders and provide treatment to help them get the rest they need.”

Three Common Disorders

- **Insomnia.** This disorder encompasses any difficulty with falling asleep or staying asleep. Some episodes may last for a few weeks, while others may be chronic.
- **Shift-work syndrome.** This disorder occurs in people who work late or rotating shifts. While those who work night shifts may be able to acclimate to difficult schedules, rotating work shifts may be more difficult to manage.
- **Sleep apnea.** This condition refers to any problem that causes breathing irregularities during sleep, resulting in disrupted non-refreshing sleep. There are three types of sleep apnea. The first – obstructive sleep apnea – is caused by a block in airflow while attempting to breathe. Central sleep apnea occurs when the brain does not send proper signals to control breathing, and mixed sleep apnea begins as central sleep apnea that evolves into the obstructive form.

Pinpointing the Problem

Several tests are available to diagnose sleep disorders and determine appropriate treatment for patients. In the case of narcolepsy – a condition in which patients may fall asleep suddenly in any situation – daytime testing is used to observe patterns that occur during a series of naps. Overnight tests are performed to monitor heart activity, eye movement, respiratory effort and other factors that may indicate a sleep disorder.

“If sleep apnea is suspected, testing is usually done over two nights,” Vaughn says. “The first night is diagnostic to determine the severity of the problem, and the second night is therapeutic and is monitored to determine what level of treatment is most effective.”

Providing an Answer

The most common form of treatment for sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy. With this treatment, a machine is connected to a mask or prongs that fit into the nose to help patients breathe more easily, particularly those who suffer from moderate to severe



Life Is Good for Hass

Jason Hass, world history teacher and football coach at Scottsboro High School, was diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea in June 2007.

“I experienced fatigue and had a hard time concentrating during the day, woke up several times during the night and had elevated blood pressure,” Jason says. “It took about a year before I decided to do something about it.”

Upon seeking help from Highlands Sleep Disorders Center, Jason underwent testing to confirm his diagnosis.

“I was observed for two nights,” Jason says. “The first night was just how I normally slept, and the second night I was observed with CPAP therapy.”

After showing great improvement with CPAP, Jason received a prescription for CPAP and has been sleeping great ever since.

“The results were immediate after I started using CPAP,” Jason says. “I wake up feeling refreshed and rested, and I can concentrate during the day. My quality of life is so much better, and the treatment has made a night-and-day difference in how I feel.”



Thanks to Highlands Sleep Disorders Center, Jason Hass is able to get a good night's sleep, leaving him more alert for teaching his world history class at Scottsboro High School.

Treatment You Can Trust

The Highlands Sleep Disorders Center is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. This distinction allows patients to be confident that the care they receive is reliable and effective.

obstructive sleep apnea. With CPAP treatment, most patients have immediate results and continue to experience better sleep in the future.

“Usually, when patients using CPAP leave the facility, their problem is solved,” Vaughn says. “Being able to provide a quick solution is the most rewarding part of this job.”

Other conditions, such as a deviated septum and narrow airways, may require surgery, but only after CPAP therapy has proved ineffective.

Living a Better Life

Sleep offers more benefits than most people realize. It allows the body to heal, enhances learning capabilities, strengthens the immune system and leads to a more productive lifestyle.

“People don’t usually realize the impact of a sleep disorder until the problem is solved,” Vaughn says. “Sleep is key to a good life, so if you want better days, get better nights.”

📞 For more information about the Highlands Sleep Disorders Center, call 218.3639.

Tips to Help You Get Your Zzzzs

Getting the right amount of sleep can offer several health benefits, in addition to making you feel refreshed. Here are some tips for establishing a sleep pattern that will leave you feeling energized.

- Maintain a regular schedule. Going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day will help your body establish a routine. Keep this pattern as often as possible, and do not interrupt your schedule more than two consecutive nights.
- Avoid exercise before bedtime. While studies show regular exercise helps to deepen sleep, strenuous exercise within two hours before bedtime can affect your ability to fall asleep.
- Learn your personal needs. When you awaken in the morning, you should feel energized. Adults typically require six to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Avoid caffeine late in the day. Caffeine and other stimulants can disrupt sleep, so limit consumption of coffee and soda four to six hours before sleep.
- Reserve your bedroom for sleep only. Do not use your bedroom for office-related or other work – making it a place only for sleeping helps to ease tension, so you can fall asleep easier.

A Hospital Hero

Sherry Carson is HIGHLANDS MEDICAL CENTER'S "Hospital Hero" award winner.



EACH YEAR, the Alabama Hospital Association encourages hospitals to nominate employees for the statewide "Hospital Heroes" contest. The contest seeks to honor those employees who make a difference not only in the lives of patients, but in the lives of their co-workers, as well. Nominated by her fellow employees for her "heroic contributions to health care," Sherry Carson, an RN for Highlands Home Health, was named Highlands Medical Center's 2007 "Hospital Hero."

"Sherry is a hero to everyone she meets," says Debra Brickley, Director of Highlands Home Health. "It's not unusual for us to receive phone calls from local physicians, social workers, pharmacists or patient families applauding her for going above and beyond the call of duty for her patients."

"Sherry has made a difference in our hospital and in our community. She will often return to a patient's home after hours to check their prescriptions and ensure they've received the correct medication. She helps educate her patients and families, and always with a word of cheer. Her passion is a blessing to others."

— Debra Brickley, Director of Highlands Home Health

Like Family

As a home care nurse with Highlands Home Health for the past 14 years, Carson coordinates care between patients and their physicians. She takes pride in the rapport she has developed with the patients she visits, often getting to know them like family.

"I love having the opportunity to help patients in a one-on-one atmosphere," says Carson. "It's so rewarding to know that patients look forward to your visit. Words can't describe it. They treat me like family."

In addition to her nursing duties, Sherry can also be found working at concession stands at various community events and speaking to local civic organizations and churches. She also volunteers her time by working with organizations such as the Jackson County branch of Care Assurance System for the Aging and Homebound (CASA) and assisting in the homes of her patients.

"If we see a need in the home that is beyond the nursing field, if patients can't afford their medications or if they might not have enough food, we know appropriate agencies to contact for assistance," says Carson. "We serve each patient as a whole, because during my years as a nurse, I have learned that patients need more than just medical care."

As far as the award is concerned, Carson says although she was honored to be recognized, she doesn't consider herself a hero.

"I was very excited to win this award, but I don't do what I do to win awards," she says. "Our whole team at Highlands Home Health is full of heroes. I wouldn't be able to succeed at my job without them."

Highlands offers congratulations to Carson – a true Hospital Hero! For more information about the services offered by Highlands Home Health, call 259.4840.

Do You Know a "Hospital Hero?"

If you know someone at Highlands Medical Center who goes above and beyond the call of duty and deserves to be recognized as a hero in the eyes of our community, why not nominate them for the 2008 "Hospital Hero" award? Call 218.3789 and let us know!

Could Your Child Have *High Blood Pressure?*

COMMON SENSE DICTATES *that most adults realize they need* to watch their blood pressure, but **did you know** that the disease is impacting **more and more children?**

AS MANY AS 5 percent of children in the United States have high blood pressure (also known as hypertension), which causes their young hearts and blood vessels to work overtime. While an increasing number of children are experiencing hypertension, researchers recently found the condition goes undiagnosed in as many as three-fourths of the children who suffer from it.

What Your Physician Might Miss

Adults might be familiar with the blood pressure cuff and hope for the ideal measure of around 120/80. However, children's blood pressure is determined based on height, age, sex and other factors – which can vary greatly from child to child.

For this reason, it is not only important to measure your child's blood pressure at annual checkups, but the readings should also be tracked from visit to visit to ensure there are no abnormalities.

Another reason hypertension is often undetected in children is the lack of symptoms. While dizziness, extreme fatigue, headaches or shortness of breath are all indicators, many children experience no symptoms at all.

What You Can Do

Hypertension in children is often a result of two factors – lifestyle, which includes obesity, high salt intake or lack of physical activity, or a larger problem, such as a kidney or heart condition.

Because high blood pressure during childhood can make a child more likely to experience heart disease and stroke as an adult, it should be detected – and treated – as early as possible. Beginning at age 3, ask your physician to measure your child's blood pressure and continue to do so at annual checkups.

 For more information, talk to your child's physician or call Highlands Physician Referral Line at 218.3600.

Test Your Blood Pressure IQ

Attention, parents! What you don't know about your child's blood pressure can hurt you. Take this quiz to find out how much you know about children and this condition.

- 1 Which factor affects your child's blood pressure?
 - A. activity and rest
 - B. body temperature
 - C. emotional state
 - D. all of the above
- 2 When your child is 3 or older, how often should you have his or her blood pressure checked?
 - A. monthly
 - B. every six months
 - C. yearly
 - D. every three years
- 3 Which is not a proper lifestyle modification for kids with high blood pressure?
 - A. increased salt intake
 - B. increased exercise
 - C. relaxation techniques
 - D. increased fruits and vegetables intake



Answers:

1. D. Your child's blood pressure changes from minute to minute – often for all of the reasons listed. Because kids are often nervous at the doctor's office and emotional state can cause blood pressure to rise, your child's doctor may take three readings in order to achieve the most accurate measure.

2. C. A blood pressure reading is an important part of your child's annual physical. Be sure to ask your physician for this reading, and inform him or her of any family history of high blood pressure. This history may indicate to your doctor if your child is more likely to have high blood pressure.

3. A. Excessive salt intake causes blood vessels to retain more fluid, making the heart work harder to keep blood flowing. Doctors often recommend kids cut back on salt intake, as well as make the other healthy lifestyle modifications listed above in order to keep the heart and blood vessels healthy.

 Have a health-related question? Log on to www.highlandsmc.com, click on "Health Information," and then "Health Library."

Did You Know...

Nocturnal leg jerks
and restless legs
can cause daytime sleepiness
and loss of energy?

Did You Know...
Highlands Sleep
Disorders Center
can help.

The Center is
fully accredited by
the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.
218.3639

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